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**Theses for presentation at the Budva convening on issue of corruption, transparency & accountability**

**The Civic Initiative for a Clean Parliament (CIPC), “Meet Your Candidate!”**

launched in November 2008 by 7 prominent local NGOs**:** Access Info Center for Promotion of Access to Information, ADEPT Association for Participatory Democracy, Association for Independent Press, Center for Analysis and Prevention of Corruption, Center for Investigative Journalism, Independent Journalism Center and Soros Foundation-Moldova.

Purpose: to raise awareness on the importance of a well informed electoral choice, as well as to increase Moldovan political parties’ accountability towards voters.

The main activity of the project was to conduct investigations on the election contestants of the main political parties to observe if they comply with the 7 integrity criteria put forward by the Initiative: declaration of property and its compliance with actually owned assets; use of administrative resources for personal or party benefit; mismanagement of those public offices held by the candidates prior to launching into politics; public image, etc.

In 2010, in the context of November early parliamentary elections campaign, a group of investigative journalists monitored around 200 candidates contesting a parliamentary mandate. The list was made up based on the electoral prospects for political parties registered for the campaign. The final version was double checked by a group of lawyers, as well as by the members of the Initiative. As a result, according to the initial plan, 200,000 leaflets „Meet your Candidate!” enlisting 30 candidates who had not met the integrity criteria were printed (150,000 in Romanian and 50,000 in Russian) and were due to be distributed after a press conference announcing the monitoring results. However, an integral distribution of the leaflets was not possible as the CICP was sued by several candidates and, as a precautionary measure the Court distrained upon overall leaflet distribution. Thus, only 22,300 leaflets were distributed before the issuance of the aforementioned Court decision. The members of the Initiative appealed the Court decisions and the cases are currently being examined in the Court.

Solving the four lawsuits initiated by the electoral candidates, within the third edition of the „Meet your Candidate!” campaign launched on the eve of the November 2010 snap Parliamentary elections went slower than initially envisaged. By mid 2011 the interdiction to distribute the leaflets with a list of candidates who has not met the integrity criteria was repealed. The first trial court decision was delivered in November 2011. It declared that CICP did not trespass against honor and dignity of the electoral candidate through publishing the information in leaflets. The foundation and the CICP members decided not to distribute the remaining edition at the end of 2011, as the information would be outdated and would confuse the public.

The CICP found in courts a non-uniform judicial practice in similar cases on protection of the right to freedom of speech of the media and civil society before parliamentary elections. Despite the similar character of the cases, the solutions given by courts were different. And this despite the obligation of the countries parties to the European Convention of Human Rights to organize free elections “in conditions that would ensure free expression of the people’s opinion regarding the election of the legislative corp.”

Opposition party lost in all stages while, the representative of the ruling coalition was winning and ultimately the case was dismissed for failure to observe the procedure.

**New Strategy objective:**

***Promoting Integrity in the Public Function through Increased Civic Control***

Instead of a general approach towards integrity and anti-corruption, we aim at specific interventions which would lead to combating impunity through advocacy, advice to National Commission for Integrity and National Anticorruption Center, grants for monitoring and investigations, and for professional development of journalists active in this field. Our overall objective is to dispel the perception that high level officials and magistrates are untouchable and can never be sanctioned or removed for corruption related offences. To achieve this objective we intend to foster the following changes:

1) the NCI is functional and objective in its decisions. This will be achieved through: a. a civic monitoring the NCI’s activity and putting pressure when it tries to cover up conflicts of interest or integrity related cases of high level officials; b. by building and supporting cases meant to test the NCI; c. capacitating journalists and interest groups to use new technologies to effectively document, report and advocate;

2) legislative amendments on voiding administrative acts/contracts signed under an act of corruption drafted and submitted to the government and Parliament to effectively implement the Council of Europe’s Civil Convention on Corruption. Progress will be assessed based on the quality and quantity of decisions of NCI and follow up measures taken by the authorities; concrete cases of high level officials dismissed or administrative acts or contracts voided as a result of NCI decisions; improvement of the legal framework; and the number of relevant journalistic investigations.

**2014 Milestones**

1. Draft legal package/recommendations on the effective implementation of the Civil Convention on Corruption developed and submitted to Government/Parliament for approval, based on a prior review of the existent legal framework and regional practices.

2. Media and the public are constantly informed about the NCI activity and evolution of integrity related cases.

3. An increased number of conflicts of interests/ integrity related cases of high level officials are determined by the NCI, through exerting civic pressure on NCI to review all the cases which are tried to be covered up.

**2014 Activities:**

Built on cooperation between think tanks and journalists (2 think tanks + 2 journalistic organizations)

1. Monitoring income & properties and private interest declarations of 200 top officials from the Parliament, Government and Judiciary. Heads of main institutions from three branches.
2. Follow-up journalistic investigations based on the findings of experts
3. Two web pages specialized on integrity issues
4. Journalistic monitoring of the activity of NCI
5. Analysis of the legal/institutional framework of NCI functioning
6. Analysis of the legal framework of implementation of the provisions of the CoE Civil Convention on Anti-Corruption

**Challenges:**

Capacities of journalists

Geopolitical context

Constitutional provision regarding the presumed licit character of property